

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, KS, US, SOPN

SUBJECT: KOREAN EFFORTS TO INFLUENCE CONGRESSIONAL OPINION

1. IN REVIEWING CONSIDERABLE EFFORTS EXPENDED OVER PAST YEAR TO INFLUENCE CONGRESSIONAL OPINION IN DIRECTION FAVORABLE TO ROK, SENIOR KOREAN OFFICIALS CONCERNED HAVE APPARENTLY CONCLUDED THAT IN GENERAL THEY HAVE CONCENTRATED EXCESSIVELY ON COMMITTED FRIENDS AND KNOWN OPPONENTS, NEITHER OF WHICH ARE SUSCEPTIBLE TO CHANGE OF ATTITUDE, AND HAVE FAILED TO PUT THEIR POINT OF VIEW ACROSS TO MANY CONGRESSMEN, INCLUDING NEWER ONES WHO LACK KNOWLEDGE OF KOREAN PROBLEM AND ARE NOT COMMITTED. KOREANS ARE ALSO AWARE THAT IN MANY INSTANCES THEIR EFFORTS HAVE BEEN PITIATED BY OVER-KILL IN TERMS OF FLATTERING HOSPITALITY (HONORARY DEGREES, DECORATIONS, LAVISH ENTERTAINMENT) AND BY PERFUNCTORY ATTENTION TO SERIOUS EXCHANGE OF VIEWS.

2. KOREANS HAVE ALSO BEEN DISAPPOINTED AT PERFORMANCE OF THOSE, PRIMARILY FROM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, WHO HAVE BEEN PLACED IN CHARGE OF THESE EFFORTS AND WHOSE OBSEQUIOUSNESS AND INABILITY TO CONDUCT MEANINGFUL DISCUSSIONS WITH VISITORS HAVE IN MANY INSTANCES PROVEN COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. KOREANS HAVE CONSEQUENTLY PLACED RESPONSIBILITY FOR PLANNING FUTURE LOBBYING EFFORTS IN HANDS OF SEVERAL YOUNGER AMERICAN-EDUCATED KOREANS, WHO ARE BETTER FITTED FOR TASK AND ARE

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RESPONSIVE TO ADVICE.

3. EMBASSY RECOGNIZES PROBLEMS INHERENT IN ASSISTING OR ADVISING ROK OFFICIALS ON CONDUCT THEIR EFFORTS TO OBTAIN US PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR THEIR POSITION. ROK DOMESTIC POLITICAL PICTURE IN PARTICULAR HAS MANY ASPECTS WHICH RUN COUNTER TO AMERICAN VALUES AND TRADITIONS AND WE WOULD NOT WISH TO APPEAR AS APOLOGISTS FOR ROKG IN THESE RESPECTS. NONETHELESS, ON BALANCE, US POLICY INTERESTS HERE ARE OF SUFFICIENT IMPORTANCE TO WARRANT FRIENDLY INTEREST IN ENSURING THAT ROKS HAVE MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE IN TWO-WAY DIALOGUE WITH US OPINION LEADERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHOSE KNOWLEDGE MAY BE SUPERFICIAL OR BASED PRIMARILY ON WELL-PUBLICIZED CRITICISM BY ROKG'S OPPONENTS.

4. WE WILL BE STUDYING MEANS OF RENDERING APPROPRIATE ASSISTANCE AND ADVICE TO WHAT APPEARS CERTAIN TO BE CONTINUING ROK EFFORT IN PUBLIC RELATIONS/OPINION MOLDING FIELD. IN MEANTIME, AS FIRST STEP, IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF DEPARTMENT COULD PROVIDE US WITH LIST OF CONGRESSIONAL AND PERHAPS MEDIA FIGURES WHO POSSESS USEFUL DEGREE OF INFLUENCE, HAVE OPEN MINDS ON KOREAN ISSUES, AND MIGHT THEREFORE BE LOGICAL TARGETS FOR WHAT WE HOPE WILL BE BETTER BALANCED KOREAN EFFORTS (AND WHOSE VIEWS IN TURN MIGHT HAVE SALUTARY EFFECT ON KOREAN ATTITUDES WITH RESPECT TO ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO U.S.)
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